

Mr. Spitzers  
Rev. John Rowe suggested  
that I contact you. I am  
leaving for you a "letter to the  
editor" I have written to  
Seattle Gay News. This letter  
won't be printed (a larger  
article describing my case  
and its connection with  
other police harassment  
cases will be printed instead)  
but my letter tells in  
detail what happened to  
myself + my lover, and I  
think you should be aware  
it.  
Please contact me if you  
have any questions.  
Steve Johnson  
phone: 322-7042

To the editor:

My lover and I were walking from the Golden Crown to the Brass Door, with our arms around each other, Tuesday night about 10:45. As we crossed a street, we noticed two police cars parked nearby; one of which shined its spotlight on us as we walked by. Since the street was well lit, I assumed it was a harassment tactic, designed to let us know they disapproved of Gays showing affection in public. As we walked on, one police car followed and stopped us. "You're asking for it, walking down the street like that," the driver (Officer John E. Neduma, Badge 2372) told us and asked for our I.D. For a brief moment, I thought he might mean that we should be careful, and that walking arm in arm was "asking" for homophobes to attack us. But the tone of his voice made it clear that he meant otherwise. He told us that we were being lewd in public and the officers in the other car would back him up. When I asked for his name and badge number, he became uptight and said he would have to arrest us for lewdness in public. He said that policemen have a lot of discretion in these matters and that he would have let us go with a warning, but by asking for his badge number, I was inferring that we were being harassed. He said he would now have to arrest us so that the IMPARTIAL judge who would preside over our case could tell us that no harassment had occurred, just upholding of the law. He ~~wipped~~ <sup>flipped</sup> out his ordinance book and said Ordinance #102843 stated that "touching or fondling the buttocks" in public is illegal. My arm had been around my lover's ~~shoulder~~ <sup>shoulder</sup>, his around my waist, with his hand in my back pocket. Since four police officers had seen him with his hand resting in my back pocket, it was clear how the judge would rule. Officer Neduma said it gave him great pleasure to tell us that in past cases of lewdness

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the judge always had ruled in his favor.

We stood in the cold while Meduna and the policewoman beside him sat in their warm car and babbled for 45 minutes about Initiative 13 and how Capitol Hill residents were passing petitions urging the police to crack down on Gay activities in Volunteer Park. He went on, often repeating himself, about the various Gays he had arrested in bathrooms. The policewoman said that if we were allowed to continue holding each other as we had been, that pretty soon people would be having sex in the street. She said the police protect the rights of the majority and the majority found what we had done offensive. Officer Meduna claimed that he didn't care what we did in private because we are "Free, white and 21".

Throughout his tirade, the same motif surfaced continually: Apologise for asking for his name and badge number and say that there had been no harassment or selective enforcement of the law. If not, we would have to be arrested so that a judge's verdict would "prove" to us that there had been no harassment.

We are leaving for Europe soon and didn't want to postpone our trip for a court case that we would surely lose, and more important, my lover is a teacher. Exposure of his sexual orientation could cost him his job and a lewdness conviction would kill any hope of further employment in the teaching field. So we apologised for having the audacity to stand up for our right to ask his name and badge number ( I ended up memorizing it as we stood there for three quarters of an hour). To placate him, we said that there had been no harassment and thanked him for educating us on the city ordinance (buttocks, genitals and, just to be sexist, women's breasts, cannot be touched in public. Holding hands and putting your arm around someone is permitted).

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There is no use swearing out a formal complaint against Officer Medina, since clearly the conclusion drawn will be: Four police officers saw two homosexuals being lewd in public and were kind enough not to arrest them. Needless to say, heterosexuals doing the same thing, or for that matter, people touching each other while playing football, would not have been stopped by the police. I am contacting the mayor's office and want the community to be aware of the "legal" harassment, humiliation and blackmail of Gays by the reactionary element in the Police Dept.

*Steve Johnson*